

Critical Discourse Analysis of Bulhe Shah's and Mast's poetry

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to capture the essence of two Sufi poets hailing from divergent origins, Baba Bulhe Shah from Punjab and Mast Twakalli from Balochistan to see their ways of preaching Sufism through their idiosyncratic ways. It also looks into their poetic narratives and underlying discourse embedded in them by analytically investigating the phenomena under study. The study is secondary in nature, so the data was collected from their books and then thorough study of their poetry was undertaken. The study in the process searched for common emerging patterns appearing in the poetry and their Sufi expressions.

Keywords: sufism,
discourse analysis,
idiosyncratic ways

Introduction

There has been a great confusion about Sufis whether they only sit alone somewhere and practice their spiritual rituals or they are the active participants and contributing to the social uplift of society and social change. Various arguments have been generated in order to explicitly address the stated confusion; similarly, people have raised questions about their essence in the chain of society and social cohesion. Writing on the very point, writers have written so much to justify the contributions of Sufis through their poetry, their practices, their rituals and approaches for greater a peaceful society. As Anjum (2011) puts it that Sufis have always spoken loudly against the barbarity, social injustice, inequality, class discrimination and biased social stratification (p. 48). She gives us the example of Bulleh Shah, Data Fareed Ganj Bakhsh and many more to support her argument favoring the role of Sufis engaging in worldly matters. Sufis discussed much about social stratification and stressed the notion of equality among masses and the only distinguishing thing among them was their supreme association with divinity. Challenging *ashrafya* or ruling elites on their unjust attitude and mistreatments, against which they created a universe of their own in form of *khanqahs* where there was no prohibition of entry for any class, age and etc. It was a practical movement of

resisting the then ill system.

Further, she proceeds that no bias or bigotry was observed by the Sufis in their companionship, which, led to the massive attraction towards their practices and people started joining them in great numbers seeking inner peace. (Anjum, 2011, 48)

Sufis are common human beings like all of us, the only distinction lies in them is their spiritual gain, their affinity with divinity, their quest to seek the greater and absolute 'truth' of themselves. Moreover, the structure of hierarchical descent exists in Sufi systems that one is favored or preferred as their, commonly, chief or head whose selection is based on spiritual closeness of his to divine power or Allah. (Anjum, 2011, 50)

Distinction of Sufis from the rigid religious people bases on couple of systematic concepts, albeit working under the premises of Koran teaching, deviation occurs in certain ways. Ali (2010) on Sufi distinction, establishes that Sufi looks into the Koranic teachings 'from inside', they seek for internal enlightenment and strive to work for this very purpose to gain supreme satisfaction, for 'Sufism was inspired by the Koran' (p. 23)

Differing from hard-line religious spokesman, the image and stance of Sufi towards religious perspective is softer and peaceful. They contributed to the process of social world by producing literature in form of poetry to construct their very beliefs and discursive practices through language that reflect their intellectual depth and declare them sensitive and conscious souls of their time.

It was, and has been, their softer stance on religious participation which attracted people towards their approach and style of remembering God. Sufis struggled to spread Sufism more on local level by making things easier to them and encouraging their participation in the process. They seem to understand the psyche and nature of people, which is why; they built the concepts to proliferate indigenization of Islamic teaching or Sufi teachings among local people. It was more of indigenous form of Islam. (Ali, 2010, p. 26)

Their vocabulary formation linguistically proves the discourse formation of Sufi referring to Koranic teachings and 'interior spiritual experience' by the end of eighth century. (Hassan Ali, 2010, p. 25) The indigenization process took place, as Ali (2010) synthesizing Islam to the local beliefs by the help of prevalent literary traditions. Linguistically, synthesizing of Islam in local setting, to some extent, believes to be putting self into the discursive process and analyzing the process through oneself. Sufi expressed self-doctrines among the masses through discursive process through their poetry and religious discourse.

Having said so, Eaton (1974) considers it a Sufi trait bringing the concept of harmony and creating links to settle the odds between Hindu and Muslim (p. 117). The primary focus of my study is the contribution of Sufis in social life through applying discursive practices and constructing their valued discourses, therefore, I would relate to the relative elements of Sufi struggle pertaining to my study. Eaton (1974) poses us with the concept that Sufis participated practically against ill-treatments, as pertinently stating, Sufis felt the agony of marginalized and socially disowned people, like untouchables in India. Further, merging into the folk traditions, Sufis were the ones who encouraged the beings of women and their

essential participation. Eaton (1974) asserts sufi poetry even paid attention to the women's needs as well, which in fact, turned out to be great rituals today. Their amalgamation with folk literature has contributed much to connect with common masses. Their consistent discourse formation through discursive practices led them to merge into the masses. Sufi merging into practicality of their beliefs and teaching the essence of religious doctrines simultaneously run parallel. It evidently exists in their religious venture that they believed in practical application of their beliefs, such as, participation in folk culture evidenced their urge to be active parts of social flow.

Maintaining their both religious and social persona, Sufis intended to explicate religion so easily that people should not find the hurdles to understand the very basic essence of the concept of God. As Eaton (1974) puts that Sufi tried to convey in simple words that to have feelings of comfort in unity of Allah.

Eaton (1974) tells us about Sufi's approach to world and their practices of living, which includes, fair treatment of both genders, as Sufis did not have stereotypical or biased viewpoints towards female gender and encouraged their role equally that of a men. In conclusion, he discusses the questions raised against Sufis, such as being missionaries of Islam and expanding it to whole world. He believes that the very question of Sufi being missionaries working for the expansion of Islam is not very valid here. Consciously, it was not meant to attract non-Muslim for conversion as he argues, rather those were 'supposed supernatural power' of Sufis and their fair treatment which brought non-Muslim closer to them to share their problems on certain issues.

Research questions

Along with major research question, I have devised two sub-questions to relate my studies to its research method and to guide it properly for the possibility to be researched. It is employed to receive much from the study in precise fashion. Those sub-questions are the following:

- What are the commonly emerging discursive patterns in their poetry?
- How have they constructed their specific discourse in their poetry?

Significance

The study is conducted with the aim of seeking deeper exploration of Sufi discourse in social set up and makes our way through the Sufi poetry to reach at a point of finding something valuable. This study may contribute to the ongoing research in the field, in general, and to the development of linguistic analysis of Sufi poetry, in particular. It is expected from the research to attain a sophisticated conception of Sufism in today's world and its possible contextual application in modern world. To know the essence of Sufism, this study attempts to analyze through poetry because it is believed that Sufis have greatly expressed themselves

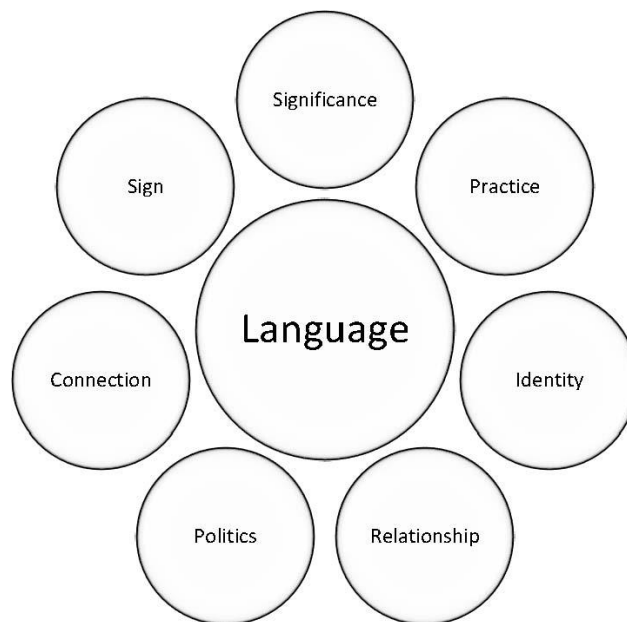
and their perspectives about world through their poetry.

Research methodology

Considering the secondary nature of the study, the secondary data for the research was retrieved from the poetry of both poets and to attain that purpose, various resources were used to collect the poetry of the both sufi poets and were rendered literal translation by the researcher himself. They were collected from their books and books written on them containing their poetry titled Baba Bulhe Shah ka Kalam (Words of Bulhe Shah) and Mast Tawakali. The method of analysis of study was content analysis to find out patterns embedded in the poetry and the systematic associations of expression which help them construct their discourse through discursive practices.

Theoretical underpinning

The functionalist approach which asserts that language functions and creates meaning in a social surrounding. Likewise, poetry is mediated through language to perform functions of manifold. Correspondingly, the framework for critical discourse analysis of the poetry in this research is of Gee's functions of language which he classes in seven categories. The rationale to have this framework is to see and analyze their poetry in various dimensions, for this framework provides us the ways to find out seven functions language use or discourse construction. Gee (2011) states that our purpose of writing or speaking is with reality which is constructed in seven building blocks. He considers them 'building tasks' of language, of which a discourse analyst can work on.



Gee (2011, pp. 17-20)

Data analysis

Bulleh Shah Qadiri of Qasur

Bulhe took words from all the dialects of Punjabi which is primarily written in Maanjhi (standard Punjabi) (Puri, 1997, p.130). Further, talking about his poetry, Puri (1997) maintains that Bulleh dismissed all sorts of physical structure signifying a particular belief like mosque, temple and clergy, and he found the absolute love and worship in respecting his Master, Inayat Shah (p.131)

Bulhe's poetry seems to be of sort of moderation and ostensible depiction of less rigidity towards religious sentiments and practices, his focus remains more on cleaning the 'inside' than physical appearance and earthly desires. Consistency of emphasis upon the elimination of negativity and elimination of evil within oneself categorically posits Bulhe's approach towards socio-religious phenomena distinctively. As he proposes in his poetry;

*Surrender to the love of Allah
He is not just found in mosques*

(Literal translation from his poetry book Baba Bulhe Shah kakalaam)

He keeps proposing this very idea of inner understanding of God and considers that Koran suggests the same thing. His poetry both explicitly and implicitly depicts his resistance and his fight against the unjustly constructed social system. Not only in poetic expression but also in body language, Bulhe had demonstrated his intense opposition systems of beliefs against those who had belief in caste, class and biasness.

Resisting supreme identities creation, chanting the notion of human equality without the prejudice of ethnicity, race and occupation, become the benchmark of Sufi struggle, in particular Bulhe's poetry, against the social injustice (Anjum, 2011, p.59). He resisted 'birth-ascribed identities' both verbally and literary and sincerely raised questions against such formation in society. Despite belonging to a socially and religiously privileged status 'Saiyyid', he rejected this privilege and said 'he should never be addressed as such.' (Anjum, 2011, p. 59)

Anjum (2011) terms his resistance and struggle against the discrimination based on caste as 'launching a crusade' via his influential poetry (p.61). He preferred to have been called after the name of his low-caste preceptor. Talking about Bulhe's religious affiliation Anjum (2011) puts that neither did he stand as believer or non-believer while protecting his 'emancipation' (p. 61).

Mast Tawakali

It is widely believed among Baloch folks that Mast lived near Kohlo and was shepherd who happened to fall in love with Sammu (which he consistently referred to in poetry) who was a married woman already.

Ishq is the instrument of his poetry, his philosophy and his imagination. A sort of

framework is *ishq* through which he seems to found his poetry and perspective on. He condemns violence through the gesture of love using imperative form of communicating.

Is piry pully ma sare daran
Rad knankatara yazeedgy a
(*Will protect her with shield of flowers*
Rejecting the swords of Yazeed)

Tawakali expresses his thirst for love and to spread love in following verses.

Dost pa taimonj ahchenk asatune egbotgan
Kouranj agena maskhkangonbandaaerbaran

As the sufi tradition believes in equality of human beings despite their colors, race and gender, Tawakali, through the lens of Sammu's love, addresses and discusses women in a very creative diction his poetry.

Jowannaenth Sammigon buzgulen mardan
Buzgulimard o dirtagshalwaran
(*Sammi (women) is not for shepherd*
Not for the torn-clothed ones)

Marri (2007) writes that Mast advocated the concept of women's creative aspect and condemns the then situation of women via his particular discourse in poetry wherein he addresses to all women condition through Sammu, his beloved, which women are not to be assigned the task of shepherding, rather much more creative work can be taken from them. Meanwhile, Mast portrays the picture of women in Baloch society of his era and seems unhappy to experience it.

Dost mani bewa kankuta wando gon buzan
Pad shapadi a koh bun o kodan o garan
Beloved of mine is shepherding
In mountains
Bare footed
Because of the lazy folks

Linguistic analysis

Doing the critical discourse analysis through Gee's seven functions would eventually lead us to unpacking the meanings beyond words and reveal their discourse which they have been enacting through discursive processes in their poetic tradition. The sub-research questions mentioned above aim to find out what and how of their poetry and embedded discourse.

It is seen both the poets have diverse linguistic and cultural background, but their campaign of chanting the truth and fostering the seed of love in human being is of same origin, Sufism. Their diction may differ, their ideas may differ, even their subjects of matter may differ, but one binding force which unites them is of being with justice, reality and peace.

The critical discourse analysis of their poetry, to my understanding, helps me classify their work and label them with distinct discourse categories. Firstly, Bulleh Shah's poetry predominantly represents the discourse of equality, as he struggles against the caste system and injustice in society; secondly, Tawakalli's discourse is much concerned with peace and emancipation of age-old rusting conventions. Their distinction may be because of differing cultural contexts they are hailing from. The both poets use poetry to create links with masses and form their distinct identities which is religious in nature.

*Chal Buliya chal uthe chaliye
Jithe sare anhy
Na koi sadi zat pochhy
Na koi sanu many*

Let's go Buliya
To the land where nobody asks
About your creed, caste

(Bulleh Shah)

The linguistic aspect of this very verse, Bulleh is commanding himself which is more of direct nature and at the same time functioning basically three functions, practicing his belief by disregarding caste system, creating identity with common masses, and also relationship with ordinary people via signs, mainly in poetic mode. This verse represents his particular discourse of equality and indiscrimination. On the other hand, Tawakalli is more concerned with:

*Jowannayan jungan ibaden boli
Kewatimaal o mardu man roli
Unfavorable are the days of war
Which include the loss of lives
And alienation from beloveds*

The declarative nature of structure indicates surety of Twakkali's experience of war and he wishes for peace. It includes sort of political function and as well identity in poetry. The lexical representation with particular stress of 'jung' (war) with 'badenboli' 'harsh times' linguistically helps us defining his discourse of peace.

The common emerging patterns or notions both poets include in their poetry are of

truth-bearer, bravery and resistance against unjust social system. The thematic aspect of Bulleh's poetry revolves around social wrongs and self-imposed systems like upper class, injustice and also dominancy. On the other hand, Twakalli's themes fixes themselves in discussing Sammu, ishq and love, through which he sheds light on lifestyles of tribal people and their thinking, their behavior and treatment of women.

Conclusion

Bulleh carries a bit of apparent anger while addressing to those who have created tensions and classes, be the social or religious, in society or in religion. He uses words which are socially considered rigid and harsh, such as 'kaminy' (scoundaral) and 'shoom' (jinx) in point; whereas, Mast Twakkali brings nature into life while portraying a bit of his thought and his specific discourse with much emphasis on softer expression. There is of course much to be studied and unpacked about their ideology and discourse in their poetry of which this study is just a contribution which is hoped to have its distinct status. The future researchers may take more specific point of their personality and poetry for research process which can be more specific.

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